



HARRY G. ARMSTRONG ENSHRINED IN NATIONAL AVIATION HALL OF FAME



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Payoff

Major General Harry G. Armstrong is recognized as one of the great pioneers in aviation medicine. His contributions to aeromedical research have yielded inestimable benefits to flying safety and mission effectiveness. From the outset, Dr. Armstrong was intimately familiar with the harsh environment confronting the military aviator; extremes of heat and cold, noise, windblast, oxygen want, noxious fumes and severe acceleration forces contributed to physical and mental fatigue taxing even the best pilot's ability to control aircraft.

Accomplishment

The late Major General Harry G. Armstrong, for whom the former Air Force Armstrong Laboratory was named, was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame on July 18, 1998 for his contributions to aviation medicine and for his pioneering work that paved the way to manned space flight. Dedicated to making flying safer in all areas, Dr. Harry Armstrong gave a legacy to the present and the future that continues today at the Air Force Research Laboratory's Human Effectiveness Directorate. His enshrinement ends years of work by former colleagues to honor the physician-scientist whose work had a major impact on military and commercial aviation and America's space program.

Background

General Armstrong, who died in 1983, is an Air Force legend, primarily for developing protective flying equipment and advancing scientific knowledge in aviation medicine. In 1935, Armstrong served as the founding director of the Physiological Research Unit at Wright Field, later re-named the Aeromedical Research Laboratory. He convinced Army Air Corps leaders to establish this organization as a separate medical research laboratory for the purpose of improving protective flying equipment. During his Wright Field years, Armstrong co-designed the human centrifuge used in many studies involving the effects of G-forces on pilots. He also developed crash helmets, shoulder-type safety belts and a horizontal altitude chamber. During World War II, Armstrong's medical research contributed to a significant reduction in mortality and physiological incidents among combat air crews. He directed work that led to the reduction of flight casualties resulting from hypoxia, combat fatigue and aircraft 'ditching at sea.' Following the war, Armstrong became Director of Research in the Office of the Air Surgeon in Washington DC where he established the Department of Space Medicine in 1949 and proposed the organization of an Air Force Aerospace Medical Center. Armstrong became Air Force Surgeon General in December 1949 and Surgeon of the U.S. Air Forces in Europe in 1954. He retired in 1957. At age 82, the year before his death, Armstrong was awarded the Edward Warner Award, the highest honor of the International Civil Aviation Organization. He was only the second American to receive this honor; the first was Charles Lindbergh who was awarded it posthumously in 1975. In 1986, the Air Force honored Armstrong by re-naming the Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory after him. In 1990, this lab and others formed the Brooks-based Armstrong Laboratory.